

# SERPENTS IN HEDGES.

A PLEA FOR MODERATION IN  
THE HOURS EMPLOYED IN BUSINESS.

BY

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"If God had laid all *common*, certainly  
Man would have been the *incloser*; but since now,  
God hath imputed us, on the contrary,  
*Man breaks the fence, and every ground will plough.*"

GEORGE HERBERT.

"I sought for a man among them that *should make up the hedge.*"

EZEKIEL XXII. 30.

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SOLOMON hath written (Ecclesiastes x. 8), "WHOSO BREAKETH AN HEDGE, A SERPENT SHALL BITE HIM."

In these few words, we have both parable and proverb. The parable is this: A certain man is the owner of a portion of land. This land is enclosed with a hedge, by which the property is both described and defended. In order to intrude on this property, some person—say a neighbour—begins to break down and pluck up the bushes of which the hedge is composed. While he is destroying the fence, a serpent springs from its hiding-place (*in the hedge*), and, fastening on the intruder, wounds him with its bite. And thus, in endeavouring to injure another, the aggressor is himself injured; and he who thought to gain by doing evil to his neighbour, obtains bodily suffering—and nothing better—while he loses present health, and endangers even his life. All this is included in the saying, "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." But as the similitude *unfolded* could

not be often repeated and extensively employed, it is wrapped up in the short sentence quoted. On account of its brevity, it may be easily received and held—it can be uttered in half as many seconds as there are words: for this reason it is likely to be frequently repeated, and thus to become the property of the many; while, if it were a parable only, and not a proverb also, it would inevitably be in the possession only of a few. *Observe here the nature and the use of proverbs.* They are swift-winged sayings, intended, by the rapidity of their flight, to move over the whole world. But there is one disadvantage attending the use of proverbs, against which we shall do well to take heed. By the terseness and pungency of the proverbial form of words an influence is exerted on our minds; and this merely verbal effect is likely to be mistaken for the influence of the sentiment. Hence, men may think they understand a proverb, while they know nothing of its interpretation; and they may not only receive, but repeat, proverbs, without really knowing their intent. As to possess ourselves of the kernel of a nut we must pierce the shell, so, to know a proverb (and especially a parabolic proverb), we must carefully penetrate the words.

“Whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him.” This proverb is parabolic; and what, we proceed to inquire, is figured forth by this similitude? The immediate object for which Solomon introduces the words will direct our reply to this question. The wise man saith, “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which

proceedeth from the ruler: Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.\* Then follows—"He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." In the context it will be seen—a people are supposed to be cursed with incompetent rulers. Men competent for rulership are controlled by persons who require to be themselves governed, and who are totally unequal to rule. The real foot in the body politic occupies the position of the head, and the natural head sustains the relation of the foot. Those who are thus oppressed by "folly set in great dignity," need redress from their wrongs, and are disposed to seek it. But they are tempted to seek it amiss. They are allured to violence or to treachery—they are enticed to try to ensnare their rulers, and to endeavour to break down the fences of order, legitimate authority, and ordained power. To men in such circumstances, the warning is addressed. "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." There is another side to the application of this proverb. The men who embody "folly set in great dignity" fail of moral and right influence in government. Feeling, however, that they *must* govern, and being incompetent to govern *lawfully*, they try to gain subjection by tricks, or they exact obedience by tyranny. And to such the caution is directed—"Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." But the application is far wider than this.

\* Ecc. x. 5—8.

What Satan said God had done for Job, God has in reality done for every man. The devil said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou *made an hedge* about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?"\* And we say, Has not God *made a hedge* about ALL MEN? God has spoken thus: "Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee."† Is not this a hedge around our neighbour's *person*? "Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be full of thee."‡ Is not this a hedge around *his home*? "Let none of you suffer as a busybody in other men's matters."§ Is not this a hedge around *his affairs*? "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, nor rob him."|| "And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour, thou shalt not oppress one another."¶ Also, "Thou shalt not *covet* thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not *covet* thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's."\*\* What are these prohibitions but a hedge around *every man's property*? "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."†† "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off."‡‡ What is this but a hedge around *his reputation*? Put before me any man with whom you have to do, and I can prove to you that God has set a hedge about that man. And if the man sustain any particular relation, then he is

\* Job i. 9, 10.

+ Prov. iii. 29.

† Prov. xxv. 17.

§ 1 Pet. iv. 15.

|| Lev. xix. 13.

¶ Lev. xxv. 14.

\*\* Exod. xxv. 17.

++ Exod. xxv. 16.

‡‡ Ps. ci. 5.

enclosed by a particular fence. There is a particular enclosure for parents, and another for children. The husband is encircled with a special defence, and also the wife. Is there not a hedge about earthly rulers, and another around subjects? Are not ministers of religion equally enclosed, and also their flocks? Masters and employers are fenced round; and not less defended are their labourers and their servants.\*

And God *defends* the hedge he has set about men. He does it by expostulation. Hear Him:—"Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."† He does it by threatening:—"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."‡ "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, *crieth*: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.§ And he does it, as we have seen, by repeated precept and prohibition. It is true now, as in the day of Solomon, that "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."||—But hear what David saith on this matter: "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and

\* Consult Eph. vi. 1—4; Col. iii. 20, 21; Eph. v. 25; Col. iii. 18, 19.

† Rom. xiv. 10; Heb. xiii. 1—7; 1 Pet. v. 1—3; Col. iii. 22; iv. 1.

‡ Rom. xii. 19.

§ James v. 1—4.

|| Eccl. viii. 11.

made it ready. . . . His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.\* “And though,” saith God, “they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, *thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.*”†—“Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent SHALL bite him.”

I. The proverb we are considering has a particular application, and we are about to make special use of it; but let the reader observe, it IS BASED ON COMMON TRUTH.

Is there not here indicated one of the evil tendencies and dispositions of human nature? God has set up hedges, and men are madly inclined to break through them. George Herbert says—

“If God had laid all common, certainly  
 Man would have been the incloser; but since now  
 God hath impaled us, on the contrary,  
 Man breaks the fence, and every ground will plough.  
 O what were man, might he himself misplace!  
 Sure to be cross, he would shift feet and face.”

And not merely is a disposition to evil hinted at by our proverb, but a large class of actual sins is graphically described. Men are continually breaking the hedges which God has set up, and they are bitten by serpents.

Read the HISTORY of sin as furnished by the Bible, and transgression wears this aspect. The angels

\* Psa. vii. 11—16.

† Amos ix. 3.



that are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day—What was the sin by which they fell? Jude tells us, “They kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.”\* Into some enclosure of heaven *they broke, and God cast them down to hell*. God hedged in the tree of life that grew in Paradise—*our first parents* broke the restraint, and felt the power of God’s curse. The generation of men whom the flood destroyed, removed the boundary which God has put to sensual indulgence, and the flood came and destroyed them all. God fenced in the children of Israel from the idolatries of heathen nations; but the Israelites, by marriages with the heathen, by the imitation of their religious rites, and by relying on their help in trouble, broke down this enclosure; and the captivities, the plagues, and the many chastisements to which the Jews were exposed, show that “whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.”

The *biography* of the Scriptures also illustrates our proverb. The curse on Ham is explained by our proverb; also the judgment on Miriam, and on Korah and his company. Saul’s dethronement is thus explained, and the judgments which, after David’s conduct in the matter of Uriah, make him a beacon of solemn warning. Haman, in the matter of Mordecai, broke a hedge, and a serpent bit him.

Study the *doctrines* of sin, as propounded in the Scriptures, and you see those doctrines to be the basis of our proverb. “Sin,” writes the Apostle John, “is

\* Jude 5, 6.

the transgression of the law."\* "Be sure your sin," said Moses to Israel, "will find you out."† "There is no peace," saith my God, "to the wicked."‡ "The wages of sin," writes the Apostle Paul, "is death."§ Hence we learn—if we meddle with what God tells us not to touch—if we go whither God's prohibition excludes us—we sin; and sin cannot go unpunished. "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him."

And do not our own observation and experience expound the principles upon which this proverb stands? Have we not, for example, seen men in their haste to be rich, break through all regard to what is just, and true, and honest, and of good report; and become the scorn of society, and the off-seouring of all things? Cannot houses of business furnish narrative upon narrative of *young* men, who, defying restraints which God's law imposes, have brought disease into their body, wretchedness into their mind, stain upon their character, blight and blast and ruin upon all of real value and use which they possess! Around them is a hedge thrown up by God's law—just over the hedge is an object of desire which they are tempted to pursue—they cannot get at it without breaking that hedge—to do this appears a light thing—they do it—and now the consequences to themselves, in body and in soul, in character and in condition, are such, that the pain may be compared to the stinging of an adder, and to the biting of a serpent. All who are observers of their fellow-men have seen this. And who can say that there is nothing in his own

\* 1 John iii. 4.      † Numbers xxxii. 23.      ‡ Isaiah xlviii. 22.  
§ Romans vi. 23.

experience confirmatory of our proverb? "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If we say we have not sinned, we make Him [God] a liar, and His word is not in us." Even such as, delivered from the dominion of sin, can testify:

"Holy Lord God, I love thy truth,  
Nor dare thy least commandment slight,"

are constrained to add—

"Yet, pierced by sin, the serpent's tooth,  
I mourn the anguish of the bite."

But while we are reminded by our proverb of the nature and evil of transgression, we are also put in remembrance of the need and value of Jesus Christ's interposition on our behalf.

The bite of the serpent follows the breaking of the hedge. This bite of the serpent was literally inflicted on the children of Israel, for particular iniquity. And, when much people were dying, God said to Moses, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."\* And—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so [has] the Son of man [been] lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life."† There are wages for sin—ruinous wages. The serpent bites the

\* Numbers xxi. 1—8.

† John iii. 15.

breaker of the hedge. But there is healing for those who have broken through the restraints of the Divine law, and who have been smitten by Divine chastisement and punishment. There is healing—healing in Christ. Healing in none other—healing in Him. Healing provided by Divine mercy. Healing graciously proclaimed and freely dispensed. Healing given without money and without price. Healing as deep and as wide as the mischief. Healing made sure to a sincere and confiding appeal for it.

“Great God of wonders, all thy ways  
Are worthy of thyself—divine;  
But the bright glories of thy grace  
Beyond thine other wonders shine.  
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?  
Or who has grace so rich and free?”

II. While the proverb before us expresses common truth, it has special application to all the dealings of men with each other, and bears forcibly on the principles and style of all commercial transactions.

And does GOD concern HIMSELF with merchandize and traffic? He is in every place where His name is recorded; but is HE on 'Change—is HE on the mart—is HE in the market—is HE in the factory and workshop—is HE in the bank and counting-house—is HE in the warehouse and shop—is HE by the stall of the costermonger—does HE compass the path of the pedlar? Yes, verily; in every place of trade and commerce is God. And His eye is on every master and on every servant—on every em-

ployer and on every workman—on every profession and on every trade. The figures written with the accountant's pen He sees—the correspondence which the clerk conducts He reads—the bargains of buyer and seller He comprehends—the hire of the labourer and the wages of the workman He compares with the work—the capital of the heads of commercial houses He knows—the work of the artisan He inspects. All occupations and the multitudinous and multifarious acts which they involve, are to God perfectly known. Do any doubt the words of the writer—hear God's word! “Just weights shall ye have: I am the Lord.”\* “Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights.”† “A just weight and balance are the Lord's: all the weights of the bag are His work.”‡ “Divers weights and measures are an abomination to the Lord.”§ God tells us He heard this—“It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, he boasteth.”|| We have already heard God complain that the hire of the labourer is unpaid. And now hear Him say—“Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.”¶ Again, “Profess honest trades for necessary uses.”\*\* Thus, according to God's own word, *He does concern Himself with the transactions of trade*; noticing, among other things, the particular character of each employment, the weights and measures used in buying and selling, the amount of

\* Lev. xix. 36.

† Deut. xxv. 13.

‡ Prov. xvi. 11.

§ Prov. xx. 23.

|| Prov. xx. 14.

¶ James iv. 13.

\*\* Titus iii. 14.

wages paid for work, the spirit in which business arrangements are made, and the principles upon which trade is conducted. And hereby, it will be observed, God puts a hedge between the trader and dishonesty to his customers—between the agent and injustice to his employer—between the employer and oppressive requirements from the employed. And, “Whoso breaketh the hedge, a serpent shall bite him.”

1. As business is now generally conducted it illustrates our proverb :—it is *a breaking down of hedges*. God has enclosed the health and life of *the body* within a certain fence, and men by toil of excessive duration break that hedge. God has *given man a triune constitution*—body, soul, and spirit; and this whole nature (animal, mental, and moral) claims attention. No one of these several parts of the human constitution should be neglected; but men, by the omission of mental cultivation, by neglect of moral culture and of religious life, make God's inclosures one open common, on which pasture is provided for body alone. God has placed men in *families* and in *communities*; and by precepts to husbands and to fathers—to citizens and to members of Christ's Church, he encloses the claims which wives and children, the state and the church, have on the individual man. But men, by neglect of these claims, break down God's hedge. God puts riches, and all that riches can secure, in a sphere smaller than that which he assigns to the welfare of the soul—to a glorious immortality—to doing good—to His own glory; and

no attention to worldly occupations should exclude or interfere with these nobler ends. But men, by making wealth and its products their sole object, break through this hedge also. God confines men, in the pursuit of business, to its pursuit on right principles—in right paths—by lawful means; but men, by avarice, dishonesty, lawless competition, lying, and such like, break down this hedge also.

We appeal to our reader, Is not this true? We have ourselves heard tradesmen say—‘It is impossible to do business on strictly Christian principle.’ And our ears have tingled when young men have told us that they have lost their situations because they have refused to lie. That this breaking down of hedges in the conduct of business is common, is clear to us by the fact, that on every hand there is want of confidence. The multitude of buyers make it a rule to abate the price named by the seller; and the seller, with but few exceptions, asks more than he means to take; or if he name the price to which he means to adhere, the shop exhibits the ignoble notice, “No Abatement made.” Why have Guarantee Societies been founded—but because employers are slow to confide in the integrity of their agents, and desire security doubly sure? Tradesmen confess that they are obliged to sell some articles below cost price, that, impressing their customers with the cheapness of their establishment, they may with greater facility attract dealers. And to large profit on other articles they look for the recovery of their loss. Why are numerous Loan Societies asking usury for money, instead of interest, and getting it, but

because the word of men, and the integrity of men, are at the lowest possible estimate? This want of confidence is the growth of years; and between it and the mode in which business is conducted there is a reciprocal influence. *The hedge has been broken, and the serpent bites.* Men tell you, they adopt the exceptionable courses to which we have referred, to save their businesses from ruin. "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on a wall, and a serpent bit him."\* By evil means men cannot really prosper. As well might you cast a straw on the Thames while the tide is running down, and, standing on the bank, tell it to float up the stream, as try to get real advantage by evil means. The serpent will bite somewhere and somewhen. The Eternal God keeps the tooth in the serpent, and backs it by his omnipotence, that it may pierce and sting—that it may wound and poison. Reverenced be His name for this! Is it not an indication, that, though distrust may shake the earth, there is One in heaven to be trusted, and that all who "trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever?"

2. But we must repeat what we have little more than intimated—*the serpent bites.* That want of confidence to which we have referred, is the bite of the serpent. Many men of business have shown themselves not to be trustworthy, and now there is universal distrust. Excessive competition is another

\* Amos v. 19.



wound of the serpent. This is traceable both to customer and to dealer. Men, to increase their business, have sold goods below their value, and buyers have refused to purchase at fair and reasonable prices. And from this evil springs another—fearful deterioration in the character of the products of industry. Really good material and workmanship can scarcely be had in any department.\* Another solemn fact we mention. There is a fearful increase of diseases seated in the nervous system and the brain. A Lunatic Asylum is rising up in the county of Middlesex, which has more the appearance of a town than of one building. Is this required, with Hanwell and St. Luke's, and kindred establishments of smaller size? It is required, for mental derangement increases. From what cause? We believe largely from the intense feeling which the present mode of conducting business calls out, and *from the long and late hours during which business is conducted, and unto which it is prolonged.* THIS IS THE SUBJECT ON WHICH WE APPEAL.

Had we the opportunity of examining all the witnesses whose evidence on this matter is important, we should call the following:—*Medical men*, that they might bear testimony to the influence of unduly prolonged business-toil on health. *Wives and sisters and children*, that they might bear testimony to the influence of this breaking the hedge on domestic comfort, and on the manners and habits

\* "Good sempstresses are to be hired in every village, and in London, with its famishing thirty thousand, *not at all or hardly.*"—*T. Carlyle. "The Present Time."*

of the man of business at home. *Ministers of religion*, that their evidence might bear on the connexion of late closing with attendance at the place of public worship. *Magistrates and Judges*, that their testimony might be given to the effect of breaking the hedge on vice and crime. To these we should add honest out-spoken men who are personally concerned, as, for instance—employers and masters in the evening of life reviewing their business-career—and employers of acknowledged character and skill, still in business. And to these might be added ruined souls, who are now where no brazen serpent is exalted for the healing of those who have been serpent-bitten.

It is in our power to call up some such witnesses on the evil influence of long and late hours in business. Reader! hear them.

Before listening to the evidence we have to adduce, it will be well to state what we mean by protracted hours of trade. We will put the case in the words of the Prize Essay of the Metropolitan Drapers' Association:—

“Young men, from 16 years of age to 25 or 30, are engaged in drapers' shops daily about fifteen hours, of which fourteen hours and a half are actually employed in business. During this time they are not permitted to sit down or to look into a book, but are standing or moving about from morning to night, generally in an atmosphere exhausted by respiration, and in rooms ill ventilated. When night arrives, gas-lights and closed doors complete the deterioration of the air, till at length it

becomes almost pestiferous. Meanwhile their meals must be swallowed hastily, like the mouthful of water which impatient travellers afford to a smoking post-horse in the middle of a long stage. No exercise is allowed in the open sunshine, their only relaxation being to take a walk in the streets about ten o'clock at night—when the sober and virtuous part of the community have retired to their dwelling—or to smoke and drink away the last hour of their evening at a tavern, or to form pleasure parties for the Sabbath. From the company of their friends, from all cultivated and virtuous society, they are, by their circumstances, excluded; all scientific institutions are closed against them, by the lateness of their hours; they are too tired to read after their work; and when they throw themselves upon their beds, it is, too often, to breathe, in the close bed-rooms, where numbers are packed together, an air more pestilential than that which poisoned them during the day.

“The shops of druggists and grocers are kept open as late as those of drapers; while the slavery under which milliners and dressmakers are pining, is more relentless and more fatal still. Day and night, ‘in the season,’ with scarcely any relaxation or repose, as long as the dim eye can see the stitches, and the trembling hand direct the needle, they must work on, to gratify the impatience of fashionable customers, or starve. And all these classes are found in other cities as well as in London.”\*

\* Prize Essay, pp. 4, 5.

This states our case. And we say—that trade-labour thus protracted, whether by employers or assistants, in whatever trade, is labour unduly prolonged. We say, that all such labour *breaks the hedge*, and we are quite sure that *the serpent bites*. The question now before us is—*Are the hours of trade unduly protracted, and what are the evils thence arising?*

#### TESTIMONY FROM MEDICAL MEN.

The following is extracted from the Report of Evidence given before the Committee of the House of Commons, on the Factories Bill, 1832, and is quoted in the Appendix of the Prize Essay already referred to:—

*Samuel Smith, Esq., Surgeon.*

“10341. Even supposing no labour whatever were required under such circumstances, the merely having to *sustain the erect position* of the body for so long a period is harassing in the extreme, and no one can have an adequate idea of it, unless he has been himself subject to it.”

“10343. Upon the principles on which you would reason as a professional man, does the effort to keep the body in an erect position require a constant and complicated action of certain muscles, so as to occasion more fatigue than more strenuous exertion?—It does peculiarly so; and, moreover, there is another circumstance that I would allude to; namely, the increased action of the heart that is required when that position is long sustained: it is necessary that the brain should be supplied with a certain quantity of blood, which the heart has more *labour in performing in that position than in any other.*”

“10354. Will you go on to state the further effects of *long standing* to labour?—It has also frequently the effect of producing an *ulcerated state of the legs.*”

"Exercise has a tendency to increase the strength, when it is carried short of producing actual and considerable fatigue, but when it is pushed beyond that point, it has a *directly contrary tendency*."

*Charles Turner Thackrah, Esq., Surgeon.*

"10532. *Excessive labour* is the common fault of this country.

"10533. *Excessive labour* assuredly *diminishes life*."

*Thomas Young, Esq., M.D.*

"10552. Do you happen to know the usual hours of labour in those establishments (factories)?—Never less than twelve hours, exclusive of meals.

"10553. As a physician, do you believe that even the *shortest* hours of labour you have mentioned are *too long* to be consistent with the health and welfare of the individuals so employed?—I do."

*John Malyn, Esq., Surgeon.*

"10659. I am not aware of the time allowed to operatives for the purpose of taking sustenance, but I suppose it to be short, for I have repeatedly witnessed *severe forms of dyspepsia*, arising in a great measure from, or at least aggravated by, swallowing food without mastication, in which state it was never intended it should have been swallowed."

"10661. Nature requires, at least would desire, to have a short period of repose after taking a full meal, that the phenomena I have described may not be interfered with."

"10683. Do not you think that the sense of *weariness* and *fatigue* would have a direct tendency to *induce tipping*, in order to give the body an artificial stimulus?—It would have that tendency."—"Ten hours' labour is sufficient for persons of eighteen years of age."

*John Blundell, Esq., M.D.*

says "that more than twelve or thirteen hours' labour is

*decidedly injurious, and that long-continued standing is more wearying and injurious than more active and varied exercise ;”* and that being carried on in a “*heated and impure atmosphere,*” makes it “*yet more injurious.*” “I think,” he says, “*that twelve hours a-day, including two hours for meals, is quite sufficient time for human beings to labour for a continuance.*”

*Thomas Hodgkin, M.D.*

“10901. Do you, in reference to the general experience of mankind, and the principles of medical science, believe that the customary hours of a day’s labour (namely, *twelve*) *including the necessary intervals for refreshment and rest,* are in ordinary cases as long a term of human labour as is consistent with the preservation of a perfect state of health?—It seems to me a *very rational* distribution of labour and rest.”

“10908. Should you think that labour or attention so long continued as has been just described to you (thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, and even eighteen and nineteen hours a day), although it might, in ordinary cases, be denominated light and easy, yet still requiring constant attention, and inducing much fatigue, would not produce *considerable weariness and many injurious effects on the human constitution*?—I should think that it would; I have no doubt of it.”

“10910. Then you would conceive that the *erect position* in which this labour has to be endured, would, generally speaking, give *additional severity* to that description of labour?—I think that it would.”

We have other medical testimony :—

*Dr. Southwood Smith* says :—“Our Creator has given us a frame capable of a certain degree of labour—capable of putting forth a certain degree of energy, and no more. If we disregard the limits which He has put to our capability of exertion, that beautiful and delicate mechanism upon the action of which our life depends must be deranged—must

break. And why should there be this excessive labour? The same evidence which shows its destructive influence shows also its inutility—proves that it is not economical—demonstrates that, instead of accomplishing its object, it certainly and completely defeats it. Now the evidence of this is most full, complete, and comprehensive.”\*

*Dr. Lankester* says:—“I find that there is in this metropolis a sacrifice of a thousand lives annually, through the practice of keeping in shops for a greater number of hours than the human constitution can bear. But this is not all. Where a thousand persons die from this cause, there are at least eight thousand whose health suffers from it.”†

*Thomas Wright, Esq., of Cheltenham*, says:—“I need only mention the fact, that every argand-burner consumes as much oxygen as four human beings, to prove how deleterious these late hours are to the important functions of respiration. Not only is respiration impeded by this perversion of nature, but other functions are disarranged. The digestive organs do not act. The food does no good. The blood is imperfectly made. The venous blood predominates. The brain is imperfectly exerted, so that its action cannot be healthy, nor the intellect vigorous. A man with all these functions impaired, cannot be expected to possess healthy moral action. When, his labours are over, he feels a lassitude and depression, which create a natural craving for stimulants, and he flies to the billiard-room, the tavern, or to worse haunts, there to complete the mischief which already has been begun. As nothing is so conducive to health as the cultivation of the social ties of domestic life, so by this system of late hours you prevent men indulging in those endearments, and dispose them to seek that company and to indulge in those habits which exert a most injurious influence in after life. And as it is with the derange-

\* At a Meeting of the Early-Closing Association held in Hanover-square Rooms, April 1, 1844. See Manuscript Report at the Office of the Association.

† See Seventh Annual Report of Early-Closing Association.

ment of one function, so is it with all—the whole system is vitiated. The physical injury acts on the moral, the moral on the intellectual, and the intellectual on the religious.”\*

*Dr. Bell, of Wolverhampton*, has said:—“I trust that ere long, by the force of public opinion, and by a knowledge too of our physical necessities, the whole working community will have their hours of labour shortened—so that the present suicidal policy may be given up. Recollect, also, this character [sickly and stunted] will not end with the parent—it will descend as an inheritance to the children.”†

*Dr. David Boswell Reid* says:—“As a medical man, and from observation in manufactories, and also from investigations on health, I do believe that there is no evil, no calamity, so great, so deep, or which so imperiously claims attention, as that which uproots the time and opportunity for forming social friendship, for meeting and conversing with relations, and for forming those habits and associations which are dear to every one that prizes home, or who wishes to form one he may call his own.”‡

*R. D. Grainger, Esq.*, says —“I would say, without fear of contradiction from any quarter worthy of attention—I would pledge all I know of the constitution of the human frame to the assertion, that protracted labour is nothing else than another term for sickness, suffering, and death. There is no exception to this rule.”§

*Dr. James Copland*:—“There is nothing which can be more injurious, both physically and mentally, to the middle and lower classes of society than prolonged labour. . . . I believe that no less than three-fourths of the diseases to which human life is liable in the metropolis, actually arise from this cause.”||

\* See Report of Meeting held in Cheltenham, Nov., 1844, published by Rowe and Norman, Cheltenham.

† See Dr. Bennett's Prize Tract, p. 5.

‡ See Report of Second Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

§ See Report of Third Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

|| See Report of Meeting of Early-Closing Association for £5000 Fund.



*Dr. John B. Bennett* writes:—"It was always demonstrable—if indeed, it was not self-evident—that such a system as this must exert an injurious influence on both the bodies and the minds of its victims. It must produce such *physical* results as imperfect oxygenation of the blood, in consequence of their breathing deteriorated air, impaired digestion, muscular feebleness, and increased liability to various forms of chronic disease. Still worse—its operation in the *mental* faculties must be to retard or prevent the development of their capabilities, to exclude the acquisition of knowledge, to foster the prejudices and errors that are the sure attendants of ignorance, and to contract the understanding within dwarfish proportions. Worst of all, it seriously militates against the formation or advancement of *moral* and *religious* principles, feelings, and practices."\*

*The General Board of Health*, in a letter addressed to the Secretary of the Early-Closing Association, of 7th September, 1849, states, "The Board are fully satisfied that the late-hour system, especially in close, ill-ventilated shops, has a tendency to predispose those who are subject to it to epidemic disease."

Further medical testimony may be obtained from Dr. Grindrod's "Wrongs of our Youth."

We leave this class of witnesses for another—

#### EMPLOYERS OF YOUNG MEN IN HOUSES OF BUSINESS.

We gather evidence from speeches at public meetings. At a meeting of employers,

*Mr. Thwaites* said:—"He had himself experienced what thousands from the late-hour system were now suffering—he had suffered mentally and physically from that system—he was seriously and permanently injured by the late-hour

\* Dr. Bennett's Prize Tract, p. 4.

system. It was of the utmost importance that they should consider the condition of their assistants, many hundreds of whom were driven by the late-hour system to a premature grave.”\*

*Mr. Maylard* said:—“He felt warmly on this subject, suffering as he did a great affliction, in consequence of having been subjected in early life to that abominable, wicked, unchristian late-hour system.”†

*Mr. J. Hopkins*:—“I can speak feelingly on this subject; for I well remember when suffering myself as a young man from the late-hour system, I have often wished that death itself would terminate my existence.”‡

*Mr. Winkworth, late of Gutter Lane, City.*

“I happen to know two fatherless lads, who are both apprenticed to the same master, and occasionally dine with me on Sundays. Some months since they came to my house to dinner, and, as usual, I asked them what place of worship they had attended that morning. They looked rather confused, and at last admitted that they had not been anywhere. On inquiring the reason, they stated it as a fact, that they had not left the shop until two o’clock that morning. Of course, after so melancholy a statement, I pressed the matter a little further; and then learned from them that this was not unusual, but the common practice, and that on other nights of the week they seldom left the shop before ten or eleven o’clock. Now I leave this fact to work as I have no doubt it will work. I appeal to the medical gentleman who has just addressed us, and to the honourable Member for Finsbury, who is also a medical authority, and will probably speak in the course of the evening, whether these young men, with their physical

\* See Report of Meeting of Employers held in the Borough of Southwark, October, 1849.

† See Report of Meeting of Employers held in the Borough of Southwark, October, 1849.

‡ See Seventh Annual Report of Early-Closing Association.

frames so exhausted, can possibly be in a fit condition to do their duty either to God or man?"\*

STATESMEN HAVE SPOKEN ON THIS TOPIC.

At different meetings of the Association the following sentiments have been uttered:—

*Lord John Manners.*

"We do not think any conquest, however great, any acquisition in science, however wonderful, is to be compared to the triumph which we hope at no distant day to achieve, that triumph which will give to the labouring, to the industrious, and to the sedentary artisans and tradesmen of this vast metropolis time to enjoy this life, and to prepare for the life which is to come."†

And on another occasion this nobleman said—

"The permanent success of the Manchester Athenæum, unless he greatly erred, must very much depend upon the success of this movement—early closing. For in vain did the library, the lecture-room, and the classes, offer their allurements and inducements to the rising youth of Manchester, if their mental vigour and bodily strength were exhausted by the ceaseless toil of the day, stretching even into the night. Or if, in some few instances, such as they might truly say they had witnessed this evening, undeterred by that mental lassitude, and unawed by that bodily weakness, the spirit of young men carried them forward, and enabled them to achieve those triumphs in literature to which the audience had that evening been listening, at what a cost must such triumphs in most cases be acquired! If a small quantity of human learning, a moderate enjoyment of universal recreation, were incompatible with those long hours of toil, how must it fare with that mental training and that

\* See Report of the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Early-Closing Association.

† See Report of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Early-Closing Association.

religious education which ought to qualify mankind for an hereafter? Was it not most notorious that the long hours against which they were protesting did practically prevent *even the Sunday* from being religiously observed? Was this a mere fancy of man? Alas! it was stated in most emphatic terms, and blazoned to all the world in the pages of Parliamentary Reports, and vouched for in the language of most earnest and sincere truth. The young people in the millinery establishments in London, they were told on that authority, were worked so long during all the week, that they could not get up to perform their religious duties on Sunday; but in the very few houses in which shorter hours obtained, there the young people were enabled to attend to their religious duties. Well, then, their object that night was to convert those very few houses into the great majority, and to vindicate for the sons and daughters of honourable industry, that inalienable right of all born under a Christian state, the right of worshipping their Creator and caring for their immortal souls. Nor could they be met here by the assertion that they were interfering with the freedom of individuals. Such freedom, if asserted, and he did not think it would be, was the direst of tyrannies, after what they had heard of the deplorable evils resulting from overwork.”\*

*W. Ewart, Esq., M.P.*

“It was in vain it had been said in opposition to, and as an objection against it, that the time thus given by their employers to their servants—that the leisure they bestowed on these young men in retail establishments, would be misapplied. To this objection they had, he believed, one most practical answer in the fact of one large establishment in the town, which had 100 young men in its service, adopting the system of shorter hours—the result of which step was, that 80 members were added to the Athenæum.”†

\* Manchester Examiner, November 7, 1846.

† Ibid.

*Charles Lushington, Esq., M.P.*

"The tendency of society, not only in England, but all over Europe, was to commit power into the hands of the middle classes, and it was quite evident that toil so continuous precluded that cultivation of the intellectual powers which would enable them to discharge such important duties with advantage to the community. In fact it appeared that the toil of the Saturday was protracted into the Sunday, and that the drapers' assistants were precluded from devoting that day either to devotion or mental recreation, as it was known that they were so jaded that they remained in bed on the Sunday until one o'clock in the day. The great evil was in the rich who bought in the shops at late hours."\*

*W. Herepath, Esq., M.P.*

"It was an old saying that hard work never killed anybody; and he believed that hard work in the open air and in a good atmosphere did not do so much mischief as some persons imagined. Unfortunately, however, the work required of the drapers' and other assistants was not carried on in a good atmosphere. Must not continuous labour in ill-ventilated and often crowded shops produce in the drapers' assistant disease and premature death?"†

*George Thompson, Esq., M.P.*

"I have travelled over many thousand miles of the earth and sea of this globe; I have gone through many countries and seen the condition of many millions, I might say of hundreds of millions, of the human race; I have gone through countries where despotism is untrammelled; I have seen superstition in its most awful, and horrid, and uneradicated forms; I have seen various forms of bad government, and various states of society; I have mingled with the natives, and have as far as possible made myself acquainted with their feelings; and I am bound to say that from the time I left my native land until, in the mercy of

\* London Mercury, Feb. 19, 1844.

† Bristol Mercury, May 11, 1844.

my God, I returned to it again, I have seen no class of men doomed to anything like the drudgery and toil endured by the well-dressed, respectable, and meritorious assistants in our own country.”\*

*Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart, M.P.*

“I believe that the object proposed is most excellent; and I think it is not difficult to see that in its success are involved the welfare, the morality, and the advantage, in all respects, of a large class of persons whose condition is of the greatest consequence to this country.”†

*Thomas Wakley, Esq., M.P.*

“I say, then, that the great question which has been mooted by this magnificent Association—the question of early closing, is one which intimately concerns the whole social system of this country; and if I mistake not, it will prove the greatest social movement that has ever been made or instituted in the United Kingdom.”

*Lord Ashley, M.P.*

“Your principle is true, your object is noble, and your means are legitimate. . . . Let people say what they will, the struggle which is taking place at the present time is neither more nor less than a great conflict between Materialism and Spirituality. It is a struggle between things temporal and things eternal—it is a struggle between the creation of wealth and the objects for which wealth should be created.”‡

*Marquis of Westminster.*

“However extensively schools may be established, however much Mechanics’ Institutions, Athenæums, and other

\* From a Speech delivered by him at the Hanover-square Rooms, April 1, 1844.

† See Report of Morning Meeting in Hanover-square Rooms, 1845.

‡ See Report of Meeting held in Covent Garden Theatre.

valuable establishments, may abound in this country, we know that, unless we afford opportunity for study for those who are most interested in such things, no good can be produced.”\*

*The Right Hon. Fox Maule, M.P.*

“The early-closing movement is, in my opinion, one of the greatest and best of causes—one of the most important social movements of the day.”

*Lord John Russell.*

“It is, I think, one of the greatest evils of this country, that toil has become so excessive, that all considerations of health—all attention to intellectual improvement—and even all that time which ought to be devoted to spiritual worship, is lost in that excess of labour which the people of this country are compelled to undergo. Why is it that one generation after another is to pass away consumed in this hopeless toil, absorbed in such pursuits, and without the means of improvement?”†

We might add a large amount of testimony from men connected with benevolent and religious institutions. But we confine ourselves to two testimonies under this head. 1. That of the Committee of the Norwich Christian Temperance Society; and, 2. That of Mr. Tarlton, Secretary to the Young Men’s Christian Association:—

1. “Excessive toil is one cause of intemperance, and one main support to the drinking customs of society. . . . We ask whether great assistance might not be rendered to the Temperance Society, by teetotallers taking an active part in the early-closing movement?”

2. “Many bitter regrets are often expressed to me by young men, who are anxious to avail themselves of such means of improvement, [Exeter Hall Lectures,] but who

\* See Report of Fifth Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

† See Report of Third Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

are utterly prevented by the unreasonable and anti-Christian late-hour system, which still so widely prevails."

AND WHAT IS THE TESTIMONY OF MINISTERS OF RELIGION?

*Rev. Edward Priece, Sheerness.*

"Overwork is a sin against the nature of man, for his body, considered as a divinely-constructed machine, can only exert a certain power consistent with its own health, and the interests of the all-presiding soul within, that in a normal state, is the directive energy of all its efforts; overwork is a sin against Providence, since all the arrangements of God's wise and righteous moral government are adapted to what man really is, or rather ought to be, under the suggestions of a far-seeing prudence; and this overwork is also a sin against the Gospel of the Son of God, both because that system of mercy consults all the possible interests of our humanity, corporeal as much as spiritual—for time, as well as for eternity—and because, for its reception and the successful carrying out of its gracious designs, it requires the full energies of the man, healthy and intelligent, moral and high-minded, spiritual and ever-aspiring!"\*

*Rev. J. B. Clifford.*

"At present the young men had not time for mental improvement, except one time, the Sabbath—and even the privilege of that blessed day was often infringed. The employers had already responded to the cry for earlier hours—they were ready, and the young men were ready. Who, then, were the reluctant parties? He would not believe that there was a reluctant party—he would never believe that the British public, which boasted of its love of freedom, and which manifested on all occasions its attachment to England's free institutions, would say, 'We will make slaves of Britons.'"+

\* Lecture on Early-Closing Movement, published by J. Cole, Sheerness, 1850.

+ Bristol Mercury, May 11, 1844.



*Rev. James Pringle.*

"If we looked on mau, not merely as an animal, but as a rational, moral, accountable being, if we looked on him as having a spark of immortality within him, we should give him time to think what he is, whence he came, and where he is going—but if he were going down to perdition, give him time to think also of that. Considerations of this kind went far to impose on them the necessity of forwarding such institutions as this, from which he believed a great amount of benefit would accrue, not only to the employers and employed, but to all classes of society."\*

*Rev. George Harris.*

"He regarded the early-closing movement as aiming to effect one of the most essential and valuable social reforms that could possibly be contemplated—a reform fraught in its accomplishment with incalculable blessings both to the employer and the employed, the buyer and the seller—calculated to elevate the tone of social morality in the land, and to direct public attention to those great and holy purposes which ought ever to be kept in view, and which were necessarily involved in all wisely-directed social and individual institutions."†

*Hon. and Very Rev. the Dean of Manchester.*

"They had but one enemy to contend with—public indifference, arising from public ignorance of the facts, and forgetfulness of the effect of very small actions upon the welfare of the community. Thus the shoestring of a lady, or the matching of a ribbon of her bonnet, might, by frequent repetition, as in this case, become the cause of great evil to the whole body politic. He rejoiced that the whole body of the clergy were about to be united in such an excellent object, and he appealed to them all to help it forward. He must also appeal to those who were given to be

\* Bristol Mercury, May 11, 1844.

† Ibid.

the helpmates of man, not by seeking to gratify a momentary impatience to prolong an evil which must eventually break down the strength of the parties suffering under it. Let the ladies unite with the ministers of God's Word in using their influence with both sellers and purchasers,—so to conduct their worldly bargains as might be most in accordance with the Word of God, and no doubt could be entertained that their object would be accomplished.”\*

*Rev. Hugh Stowell.*

“He trusted that this movement in Manchester would lead to a sympathetic movement throughout the country, wherever opposition existed. He was far from insinuating that there was any voluntary oppression on the part of the masters; but there had grown up an oppressive system, which, while individual guilt could be fastened upon none, fastened national guilt upon the land. This system could only have arisen from the wickedness of the human heart; and that it was a dark and fearful system, was proved by the recent disclosures before the Legislature. Let, then, every one, instead of blaming others, take blame to himself, and do all he could to rid the masters of the mischief, and to relieve the oppressed assistants. If anything more than another was wanted in these times of antagonism, and doubt, and difficulty, it was more of Christian sympathy for our brethren. The sympathy of the rich and great ought to descend freely on those beneath them, and it was the want of this that led to the growth of the system they had to deplore; and to the evils perpetrated in many work-rooms in subterraneous mines, where man was treated more like a soulless machine—like a brute, than like a rational being. It was for want of inquiry and examination into these things, that they had been allowed to go on. Did the lady know that the elegant robe which she wore had been wrought by fingers attenuated by disease, and by the

\* Manchester Courier, January 27th, 1844.

aid of eyes grown dim and blind by working through the livelong night, and scarcely finding an hour to elose in sweet repose, she would rather have worn the fabled robe which burnt the wearer, than have worn the robe which cost the tears, the headaches, and the heartaches, which many of those fair robes had cost. He blamed not the individual masters for these evils—it was the system—the mammon-worshipping, money-getting system that he deprecated, and to which they all ought to join in putting an end. This system not only enslaved the assistants, but the masters also, who were thus kept in their counting-houses to untimely hours; and this movement was as much one in favour of the employers as of the employed. He would venture to say that, if the young men had this boon granted, they would make better servants.”\*

*Hon. and Rev. H. M. Villiers.*

“It has fallen to my lot to attend some young men and women who have passed their early days in business. I have watched them in the season of consumption, which has been produced by their labours in a polluted atmosphere. I have listened to the accounts which they have given me of the deeds they were compelled to perform; I have listened to their cry for mercy, and have witnessed the repeated proofs which they have given of their deep sorrow for the sin which they had committed in their early years. It is the knowledge that they were led into this sin by habits of deceit and equivocation caused by *this system*, together with the impression left by seeing them on the bed of death, and witnessing their misery, which induces me to protest against *the system*.”†

*Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel.*

“With nothing, then, to call forth the best affections of his heart, and much to wither them up, who can wonder if

\* Manchester Courier, January 27, 1814.

† See Report of Meeting at Hanover-square Rooms, April 1, 1814.

it should be stated with truth, as it is stated, that the assistant drapers of London are, as distinguished from youths of the same class, remarkable for irreligion and immorality? If it be so, then indeed does this system deserve the very strictest scrutiny which has led to such a result. For if you see such a result in a class, a large class, you may be sure that it is to be traced, to a great extent, to the account of the circumstances in which they are placed; and if it be practicable to remove those circumstances, humanity, justice, patriotism, religion, all call for their removal."—And having described the toils of a youth confined to a shop from 8 A. M. to 10 P. M., Mr. Noel asks—"Is it possible for him to engage anew in other toils, outdone and spent as he is in body and in mind? It is absolutely impossible; and if there is a vigour of mind almost irrepressible, then it must naturally find its vent in that reading which combines the greatest stimulant with the least toil . . . . What moral result can we look for? Every place to which a youth might resort for improvement of mind, and elevation of sentiment, is shut to him."\*

*Rev. W. Curling,*

having described human and divine science, says, "This is the knowledge which I grieve to think so few of these young men can now attain unto, and that is the knowledge which, as a minister of religion, I do say they have a right to demand at our hands; and it would be a great national sin to withhold it from them any longer."†

*Rev. Dr. Archer,*

pleading for the Early-Closing Association, has said,—  
"I should feel ashamed of myself, and of the position I occupy, if I did not come forward to give my attestation to

\* See Report of First Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

† See Report of Meeting of Early-Closing Association, held at Exeter Hall, for £5000 Fund.

the truth and excellence of the principles on which this Association is based.”\*

*Rev. H. Hughes.*

“What is it we ask? I at once reply, that it is Justice—Justice for a large and oppressed class of our fellow-creatures . . . that Justice which secures the maintenance of moral rights and the redress of moral wrong.”†

*Rev. W. Leask.*

“An abridgment of the hours of labour would be hailed by [*the Employed*] as a great boon, and would be a privilege which they might turn to great moral and intellectual advantage.”‡

*Rev. W. Dibdin.*

“The late-hour system cuts off all the sources of mental improvement and of bodily health, and leaves no opportunity for moral elevation of character. What says the Word of God?—‘A merciful man regardeth the life of his beast.’ Yet, under the late-hour system, no regard is paid either to the lives or souls of hundreds and thousands of immortal beings. I feel, therefore, that, as a minister of Christ, I am not only justified in coming forward to plead this cause, but am actually bound to do so.”§

*Rev. A. M. Brown.*

“That our fellow-creatures, and fellow-citizens, of both sexes, should have been allowed so long systematically to labour fourteen, sixteen, eighteen hours out of the twenty-four, without the kind, the Christian, the philanthropic lifting up the public voice, and calling down a public odium

\* See Report of Meeting of Early-Closing Association, held at Exeter Hall, for £5000 Fund.

† See Report of Second Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

‡ Lecture at Aldersgate Institution, published by Early-Closing Association.

§ Morning Meeting in Hanover Square Rooms, in 1845.

on the practice, is a disgrace to Christians—a disgrace which can only be wiped out by our now united, untiring, strenuous efforts, till the evil cease to exist.”\*

*Rev. Francis Close.*

“As to the religious evils of this system, I ask you, How can any person so engaged, his mind occupied early and late in the pursuit of business, his whole time and attention given to the service of his employer—how can any person so taxed, give that time to prayer, to contemplation, and devotion, which every immortal spirit and rational being is commanded to devote to his God?”†

*Rev. Archibald Boyd.*

“Some may think that this is a question in which the clergyman ought not to interfere—that it is one of a purely commercial character, with which divines have nothing to do. My answer is, that we have everything to do with it.”‡

*Rev. Edward White.*

“The greatest Authority who ever spoke, said, ‘There are twelve hours in the day in which men should work;’ and I think this means that there are twelve hours in which men should not.”§

*Rev. Mr. Hanbury*

calls late and long hours “a system that must harrow the feelings of humanity, and which must convince every reasonable man that something should be done to remedy the existing evil.”||

*Bishop of Oxford*

says—“The system is not only fatal to intellectual improvement—it is fatal to all the healthier play of social

\* Report of Meeting at Cheltenham.      † Ibid.      ‡ Ibid.

§ Report of Meeting at Hereford, published by Hereford Early-Closing Association.      || Ibid.

improvement as well. How is it possible for young men, under the late-hour system, to cultivate those habits of social intercourse which God has meant to be at once the rest and the purifier of the heart of man? We know that this is impossible."\*

*Rev. Richard Burgess.*

"I know from experience that all the appliances of religion are in vain, unless you have a being to deal with who, in some measure, is delivered from the thralldom which excessive toil imposes on him. The subject is one in which a minister of religion might with the greatest propriety take a part."†

*Rev. J. Hamilton, D.D.*

"It is from the conviction that the practice still prevalent all around us, is the source of moral sin and suffering, that I have complied with the request of the Early-Closing Association, and plead with you the cause of many thousand shop-assistants in London. When a physician tells you that a thousand young men die every year of consumption, caused by the shop-system of the capital, the statement makes little impression."‡

*Rev. W. Champneys.*

"Ought there to be any class, in a country like our own, who are cut off, necessarily, from every opportunity of bodily exercise, mental improvement, and, above all, of spiritual health and life, and that only because they belong to that class?"§

*Rev. Thomas Dale.*

"In the vast majority of cases, no more care is taken of [the young man's] soul, than if he were of the brutes that

\* Report of Sixth Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

† Ibid.

‡ Sermons published at "Pulpit" Office, Blackfriars.

§ Ibid.

perish, nor frequently any more thought of his mind, than if he were a mere machine. The labours of the counting-house, or the office, or the shop, are prolonged to so late an hour, that very weariness prevents him from devoting the scanty residue of his working time to intellectual pursuits.”\*

*Rev. William Henry Jones, M.A.*

“I am decidedly of opinion that the late-hour system acts as a serious hinderance to the progress of religion. On questioning young men as to the cause of their absence from church, I am constantly met by the reply, ‘I am so jaded by the late hours of business, that I am literally obliged to seek recreation on the Sunday.’”

*Rev. Dr. Morison.*

“I can conceive of no subject more deserving of the thoughtful and ardent consideration of Sunday-school teachers than the early-closing movement.”

*Rev. J. Cumming, D.D.*

“This system lies at the root of a thousand mischiefs, and until your hours of work are curtailed, you cannot have the means of intellectual and spiritual cultivation, or social enjoyment, whatever sources of amusement may be opened. As long as the shop is made the sink of the soul, the body, the grave, and not the mere shelter of the spirit, so long must the progress of the age, so far as men of business are involved, be worthless. I believe the late-hour system has on its garments the blood of souls.”†

*Rev. Dr. Beaumont.*

“A groan comes from the shops—a groan deep, solemn, thrilling, pervading; life is at stake, health is victimised, mind is strangled: the groan asks our help, and we must

\* Sermons published at “Pulpit” Office, Blackfriars.

† Report of Second Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.



rise, and bring about a soft, gentle, quiet, amiable revolution."\*

*Rev. Dr. Hugh McNeile.*

"The late-hour system reduces its victims to a state of mechanism in business, and animalism in enjoyment."†

*Rev. J. F. Maurice.*

"We claim for those who are employed in shops, that they should be regarded as having bodies and souls which need exercise; as requiring opportunities for obtaining bodily and mental health."‡

*Rev. G. Fisk.*

"Shall there be apathy while there is one link of the chain that binds the trading community to the late-hour system continuing?"

*Rev. J. Sortain.*

"With great grief, but with great thoughtfulness (he said) if there were any persons who awakened in his mind most solemn distress, it was those tradesmen who kept open their shops, despite the voice of the country, the voice of the employers and employed. They ought to be ashamed of it; and he believed that they were acting wrongfully to themselves as well as to others. What did he want to secure? That as he passed through the streets of the town during the latter months of spring and the months of summer when called on to do so after eight o'clock in the evening, he might find the streets empty. He wanted to see that the men who had been toiling through the day, had passed from those streets, and had gone to recreate themselves in those healthful, stalwart, elevating—physically elevating—games which were so intimate to Englishmen. He spoke

\* Report of Seventh Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

† Report of Meeting, at Liverpool, of Early-Closing Association.

‡ Report of Seventh Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

deliberately. If he were a parish clergyman in the country, he knew of no position that he should like better than that which Dr. Parr occupied, when, seated on the lawn before his vicarage, his benevolent eye looked on the groups of his parishioners carrying on their enjoyments and their games, keeping up the high principle of the old English feeling of mutual love and healthful exhilaration. This was not the degrading scene of the pot-house; this was not what the political trifler carried out when the thoughts which he had gleaned from a paper, or heard from the lips of another, were repeated by him, but the broad expansion of a practice which he trusted would be infused into our towns as well as revived in our villages, so that, although he might not be a young Englishman, as Lord Manners or Mr. Disraeli might call themselves, he did claim to be attached to the effort that was being made to arouse the people to honest and physical recreation. He was anxious that, as those who had left the universities, after toiling anxiously through the winter, had gone into different districts to recreate themselves during the summer heats, the people should have the same kind of recreation.”\*

We have, in the foregoing quotations, put forward the testimony of competent witnesses on the evil influence of protracted toil. Its importance will justify its diffuseness. Employers and their Assistants, Surgeons and Physicians, unite with Statesmen and Ministers of Religion to condemn the long and late hours to which trade is daily prolonged. And the proverb is hereby illustrated, “Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.” The hedge is broken by protracted labour, and the serpent does bite.

\* From a speech delivered at a meeting of the Brighton Association, by the Rev. J. Sortain.—*Brighton Herald*, 13th October, 1840.

*Masters and employers!* we appeal to you, and beseech you so to shorten the hours of toil in your establishments as to secure to yourselves, and to all in your employ, time for recreation—time for rest—time for social intercourse—time for reading and study—time for moral and religious culture. God has placed a hedge between you and protracted labour—between you and exactions of excessive labour from your assistants; and that hedge God will defend. He does defend it. Wherever it is broken, a serpent bites.

Were we pleading with you the advancement of your own welfare, we should say, Moderate the hours of labour. From the *Christian Times* of the 21st Dec., 1849, we learn that “a meeting of employers of Paddington and the vicinity, convened in pursuance of a requisition signed by between fifty and sixty tradesmen, was held on Tuesday evening, December 18th, at the St. John’s School-room, Titchborne-street, Edgware-road, ‘for the adoption of measures calculated to bring about a general earlier closing of shops throughout the district, and thereby to afford to the young men employed therein the means of mental, moral, and religious improvement.’”

The following are the opinions of some of the employers who took part in that meeting:—

“*Mr. Beleher* moved—

“‘That this meeting is of opinion that the late-hour system is seriously prejudicial to the interests of employers, assistants, and to those of society at large, and that it is wholly unequalled for by the requirements of business.’

“He was convinced the same amount of business might be

done if the hours were considerably shortened. But he hoped the employers would not be actuated by mere selfish motives. He thought that they might safely close at seven o'clock, and still do the same amount of business. For the last eight or ten years their evening returns had decreased rather than increased—probably in consequence of the efforts made by the Early-Closing Association. If every one would adopt the plan recommended by the Chairman, it would soon be seen that the business would be done in less time than at present. Under the existing system, the bulk of the young men were debarred from any of the ordinary means of improvement. The employers were convinced that they were losers rather than gainers by the late-hour business.”

“*Mr. Matthews* moved—

““That this meeting desires to express its conviction, that the shops generally, in this and the surrounding localities, may be closed, with advantage to all parties concerned, as follows:—namely, in October, November, December, January, February, and March, at eight o'clock; and during the other months at nine, excepting on Saturdays, and on those evenings at not later than ten o'clock throughout the year. The meeting also pledges itself to do its utmost to carry this resolution into effect.’

“He had been in this neighbourhood five years; he had closed in winter at eight; and so far from his trade falling off, it had steadily progressed, and he had found the greatest benefit from spending the hours after eight with his family. In a pecuniary point of view, this change would be of advantage. The late-hour business was of no good to any one but the Imperial Gas Company. By adopting the alteration proposed, employers would not only benefit themselves, but attach to them their assistants, who would become the more valuable the more their minds were informed.”

A meeting of employers of the borough of Southwark, having for its object the abridgment of the hours of business, was held on Thursday evening, October 4, 1849, at the Three Tuns Hotel, High-street, Borough.

"The *Chairman*, in opening the proceedings, read the terms of the requisition convening the meeting, signed by fourteen employers of the locality. They were as follows:—'We, the undersigned drapers, &c., of the borough of Southwark, wishing to promote the health of our assistants, and to give them opportunity to attend the various evening classes which are being formed in the metropolis for their improvement; and being convinced that the hours of business may be abridged without detriment to trade, do hereby respectfully call a meeting of the employers of the district, for the consideration of the question.'

"*Mr. Thwaites* said—

"He had long felt an ardent attachment to the Early-Closing Movement. He had himself experienced what thousands from the late-hour system were now suffering: he had suffered mentally and physically from that system. He was, when he came to London from the country, in a state of the most robust health; he did not understand what the "nervous system" was,—he did not feel what fear was; he felt that he had all that animal power which would bring him through the difficulties of life; but he now felt no hesitation in saying that he was seriously and permanently injured by that late-hour system which he was now condemning. It was a question of great importance which the employers were now met to consider, and if they could only view it in its right light, they would at once see the magnitude of its interests to this great country, in its commercial and mercantile relations.

"*Mr. Maylard* said—

"Both employers and employed will be benefited by early closing."

"*Mr. Hows*, as a tradesman of London, said the business of which he was a member, that of pawnbroking, had already effected the object the linendrapers were now endeavouring to accomplish. He found, in his case, that the results at the end of the year were just the same as when the hours were considerably later. He had provided a library for the use of his young men, and he believed few could make a better use of the additional time thus placed at their disposal. He believed, if the privilege was more generally extended to the employed, that it would be productive of the most beneficial results to all parties.

"*Mr. Gregory* had been in business fourteen years in the Borough, in the oil and colour trade. The first ten were under the late-hour system, the last four years he had closed at six in the evening, and during that time he had not lost a single customer; on the contrary, he had in the last four years considerably increased the amount of his business. He thought there would be no difficulty in carrying out the object they had in view."\*

At the third annual meeting of the Early-Closing Association, *Mr. Hitchcock* said—

"I bear my unqualified testimony to the possibility of closing at a much earlier hour without detriment to employers."†

*Mr. Kerry, Draper, of Bishopsgate*, testified—

"I repudiate the idea that there is either profit or other advantage arising from the late-hour system. I consider the benefit to be entirely on the other side, as early closing cannot fail to give rise to a superior class of men; and what employers want in their young men is honesty and respectability of character. I cannot see how it is possible that men

\* See Report of this Meeting, published by Early-Closing Association.

† See Third Annual Report of Early-Closing Association.

who are toiling for fifteen hours a day can give that energy to business which others can who are employed a shorter number of hours. I have for some time been an advocate of the early-hour system, and feel happy to say that my young men are ever ready to promote my interest, to the utmost of their power; while I know that in late houses young men go to such excesses that their moral feelings become blunted. I feel sure that my brother tradesmen will not much longer adhere to the late-hour system.”\*

Thus—men personally acquainted with the profit-and-loss view of this question “repudiate the idea, that there is either profit or other advantage arising from the late-hour system.” If health be a good thing—if knowledge be worth possessing—if the intellectual and moral part of our nature have claims on our attention—if time spent with the members of his family by the husband, the father, or the brother, be valuable—if the working-out of the soul’s salvation be desirable—*moderate your labour.*

*But have not those whom you employ claims on your consideration?* It is admitted that you have claims upon them. But is there not a reciprocal obligation? Are young men in houses of business mere machines? Take it thus:—Say they are mere machines. A valuable machine ought not to be used wantonly. The pangs amid which these young men were born—the toil and expense of their bringing up—the wondrous mechanism of their nature, all say—Work them with care. But they are not mere machines. They can laugh and they can weep—they can be happy and they can be sad—they can will and act—they can do right and

\* See Seventh Annual Report of Early-Closing Association, p. 6.

commit wrong—they are capable of temptation, and are accountable to God. None of them were made for mere business; and if they be shut up to trade-labour, then, those are sunk in an abyss who have been made for the firmament, and they are reduced to dust whose body only is sentenced with that doom. The common plea, that if the hours of labour be shortened, young men will not improve, but abuse their leisure time, is driven back both by reason and by fact. To the fact let employers speak:—

At the Third Annual Meeting of the Early-Closing Association, *Mr. Pearse, of Waterloo House*, said—

“I have been requested by the Committee of the Metropolitan Drapers’ Association to take charge of the first resolution, and it will be extremely gratifying to me to express my approval of the objects they have in view. I must congratulate them upon the numerous and respectable assembly met here. I am desirous of making a few observations to this meeting, because I have not hitherto been present at any of the public meetings of the Association; but I have shown my approbation of its principles, by having adopted the system of early closing for some years past. This is no new question. It was first suggested about twenty years ago. It was then revived again about seven years since, in 1838; and it was at that period we adopted our present hours of closing, viz. seven o’clock for five months of the year, eight o’clock for three months, and nine o’clock for the four spring and summer months. We have found very little, if any, inconvenience from this, and we had the delight of witnessing a great improvement in the general conduct of the young men in our establishment. The health of our young men, too, has been materially improved, and has never before arrived to that pitch at which it now is. I feel no hesitation in expressing



my firm belief, that if the hours we have adopted, which seem to work well, were to become general, we should soon find that the greatest benefit would result to the assistants in the shops, and that the whole of society would be very greatly improved. Such a result would be exceedingly gratifying to us, and the relief afforded would be equally gratifying to those most interested." \*

*Mr. G. Hitchcock* has also said—

" I will conclude by stating the result of my own experience in this matter, and with bearing my unqualified testimony not only to the possibility of closing at a much earlier hour without detriment to the employers, but, what I hold to be still more important, without fear that the time thus given would prove, as some have feared, a source of evil rather than of good. In my neighbourhood, as most of you are aware, the shops have not been kept open so late for several years past as in some others; but on the 1st of November last I determined on commencing to close at seven o'clock, and to continue it for the winter; and to this hour I can confidently assert, that I have had no cause to regret it. The effects upon my young men have been of the most beneficial character—promoting their health, their moral and intellectual improvement, and, consequently, producing more peace and happiness generally throughout my establishment. This end has not been attained without the use of appropriate means; such as the establishment of an extensive library, and which now consists of upwards of one thousand volumes. There was a time when a library was one of the most unmeaning things possible in a drapery establishment, but I am happy to say that the taste for reading is increasing with the opportunity, and we now find that young men have minds, and that they will read works of a useful character." †

\* See Report of Third Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

† See Report of Second Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association;

"If any man shall say," said *Mr. Owen*, "he has doubts and fears that in giving time to young men they will abuse it, I am here to bear my testimony—and I ought to do it—that in exact proportion as I have done to them as I would be done unto, and given them time, and exercised towards them the feelings that I ought, in that proportion have they reciprocated those feelings; and I feel pleasure in confessing before this meeting, that I do not think there is a happier tradesman in London than I am; not because I can pay my just debts, not for anything that I have in myself alone, but because I am surrounded with young men of such kind, upright, and industrious feelings, and sentiments, and habits."\*

*Mr. Shoolbred* said—

"Mr. Chairman, I did not come here this evening with any idea of making one single remark; but having heard others, I am disposed merely to say that I think it quite a right impression, which ought to be felt by the whole of the employers, that not only would they not receive any injury from the change proposed, but, if it could be at all generally adopted, a very great benefit. I also think that the public would find themselves much benefited; and that, by adopting an earlier hour than they do at present, and making that as much as possible by daylight, they would not only be better served, but much more civilly attended to. There is one thing, also, which I would strongly advocate, and that seems generally neglected, and not thought about, and that is the very unnecessarily and unreasonably late hours on a Saturday evening. [This observation was received with much and marked cheering.] I recollect the time when, if there was a difference between any nights of the week, it was that we closed earlier upon a Saturday, rather than later; and I am sure, if we are to give weight to anything like a moral or proper feeling for the comfort and consistent conduct of those who are

\* From a Speech by *Mr. OWEN*, of Great Coram Street, at First Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

kept for the whole of the week at full and constant labour, there ought to be some little more relaxation—and not a little more, but a great deal—on a Saturday. I wish the employers of London would only consider for a moment, and take an account of their real receipts after nine o'clock on a Saturday evening, which I think is the very latest hour that ought to be fixed. I think they would find, striking an average from a period of two months, that the amount they received after that hour was not worth their consideration. It would be to me one of the most satisfactory arrangements to adopt a much earlier hour than is adopted on a Saturday evening. At the same time, I think we may all adopt, beneficially as well as comfortably, an earlier hour than we do on other days.”\*

*Mr. Peters* said—

“The observations which I shall offer will be very few; but as those few are founded upon experience as to the practical working of the early-hour system in our own house, I would fain hope that they will not be entirely without effect upon this meeting. It has been said by many, though I hope believed by few, that if the drapers’ assistants had more time for recreation, a greater amount of immorality and vice would exist among them than heretofore: from such a proposition, Mr. Chairman, I most emphatically dissent. I happened, sir, to be one of those persons who sanctioned and adopted the early-hour system from its earliest commencement, and in our house—a small one certainly, a very small one compared with those of many gentlemen who I see around me to-night, but still an establishment numbering sufficient young men by their influence and example to swell the torrent of immorality and much vice on the one hand, or of morality and good order on the other—and in that house, I am

\* From a Speech by Mr. SHOOLBRED, of Tottenham Court Road, at Meeting of Early-Closing Association. See Bennett’s Prize Address, p. 14.

happy to say, may be found a little band of young men as well conducted, moral, and, I hope and believe, I may add religious too, as can be found in any house in or near London; and this happy and satisfactory state of things I attribute, in no ordinary degree, to the opportunities which have been afforded to these young men, and to the way in which they have used those opportunities under the early-hour system. I am induced to make this observation on the character of our young men for two reasons. The one is to gratify the pleasure I feel in bearing public testimony to their good conduct, and to hold them up as an example to all young men who have already, or may have, the same opportunities which they have had; and the other is, that I conceive this to be a practical answer to the objection that if young men have a greater amount of time on their hands, we shall see a greater degree of folly and immorality existing among them. Mr. Chairman, I am persuaded better things of our young men than this; and I would respectfully, but earnestly, invite every employer who hears me to-night to try the experiment. If they will be particular as to the characters of those whom they take into their houses; if they will join their young men in arranging some useful and intellectual employment for their leisure hours; and, when they have made that arrangement, if they will withdraw themselves occasionally from their domestic circle, and join their young men in carrying out these arrangements; I feel quite persuaded that they will find their labour has not been in vain. The young men will manifest—and I here beg to be understood most particularly as speaking experimentally—increased interest in their employers' affairs, when they feel that their own interests are more thought of and cared for by those employers; and I am quite satisfied that both the employers and the employed would be mutually benefited by the early-hour system.”\*

\* From a Speech by Mr. PETERS, of Sloane Square, at Second Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

*Mr. Thwaites* says:—"It is to the interest of employers to give their young men every possible opportunity of cultivating their minds; for if they bring to bear upon their avocations, not only a strong, healthy, vigorous constitution, but a certain amount of intelligence besides, it will be found by every one who examines his affairs carefully, that this is the class of young men which is most valuable to employers and I am sure that, so far as loss or gain is concerned, I should hail the opportunity of closing my shop at six o'clock instead of seven."\*

Employers who have tried early closing deny that it has injured the business-habits and morals of young men, and assert that the influence of shortened labour has been decidedly beneficial. But leaving this testimony, we demand—Is it the case that young men who leave off work at an early hour are less moral and efficient in business than those who work late? In the various building trades, young men give up work at five in winter, and at six in summer. Is there more immorality among carpenters and joiners, plumbers and painters, than among drapers, grocers, and chymists? Young men employed in the Government offices and establishments, have the evening, of the day at their own disposal. Will not young men of our dockyards bear comparison for morality with the assistant drapers of London? Can it be proved that where leisure follows some twelve hours' work, immorality is more prolific than when work through fourteen or sixteen hours excludes all recreation and social repose? We think not. But even this is not the

\* Report of Fifth Annual Meeting of Early-Closing Association.

question. To withhold our neighbour's due because we fear he will abuse it, is not a principle on which man can safely and justly act. If adopted, the employed might say to the employer, "You deny me leisure because you think I shall abuse it. I believe, that if you amass money, you will not use it properly, and therefore, from consideration for your welfare, I shall not push your business." Until employers are prepared to be thus addressed by those who labour for them, they must suspend their use of the argument drawn from the supposition that time given may be mis-spent. Our belief is, that the interest of the employer will be best served by those who have opportunity for recreation, social enjoyment, and general improvement. And we repeat, Moderate the hours of labour of those who toil for you—do it for your own sake.

Silently has the present system of prolonged labour sprung up and spread. It was not always so in England, and it must not continue. There is a limit to toil set by God. He who has given bounds to the ocean—who has placed the duration of light and darkness under rule—who has put all things under law—whose universe is an embodiment of order, has made it impossible to continue toil beyond a certain limit without detriment. And if that limit be passed—injury succeeds. That injury may not be poverty—riches may be gained. But there may be lunacy with riches—premature old age with riches—self-destruction with riches—years of confirmed disease with riches—a life of no-health with riches—a neglected, and therefore

unruly household with riches—no-peace and unrest with riches. The man made rich by the long-hour system may be the murderer of men—the destroyer of morals and happiness—the adversary of souls; and may hold riches as Judas held the thirty pieces of silver—his gains may be the price of blood!

Do any ask, What can we do, then? We reply, Close earlier—shorten the hours of labour. And wait not for your neighbour. Go before him in this act of justice to yourself, and of justice to your employed. And if he refuse to follow, let him take the gain in money, while you take profit in treasures that moth and rust corrupt not, and which thieves cannot break through and steal.

We congratulate those employers who have entered on the noble work of reforming the hours of labour. And we encourage them in this work of justice by the effect which we observe is produced on young men by due amount of leisure. Let those who have not inquired into and reflected on this subject, give it their earnest consideration. Thoughtlessness and unwillingness to inquire, are in many cases the bands which bind employers to protracted hours.

We are not unmindful of the fact, that young men have originated the Association for early closing—that they are the chief instruments of carrying the movement forward, and that they are also deeply interested in the result.

We advise YOUNG MEN IN HOUSES OF BUSINESS, that while they complain of the breaking of that hedge by which their welfare is protected, it is especially important for them to remember, that

a hedge is also around their employers' welfare, which it is their special duty to regard. By close attention to your employer's welfare—by the putting forth of your whole might while engaged in business—by the right use of the leisure you can command—by reasonableness in your expectations of time for rest and recreation—show that the question of early closing has not your selfishness ~~for~~ its foundation, but a sense of justice, which extends as much to the interests of the employer as to your own welfare.

It is also important to avoid harsh and hasty judgments of those heads of commercial establishments who are not yet convinced that fourteen or sixteen hours in the day, spent in business, is immoderate, and that young men ought to have, and can usefully employ, leisure hours. Many employers have grown up amid the present system—are not conscious of its evils—and are slow to learn that a thing is not always to exist, *merely because it now is*. Impute no base and unworthy motives. Judge not. Be not rash in speaking of employers. Consider how much many of them have at stake.

WILL THOSE OF THE PUBLIC WHO MAY READ THIS, suffer the word of exhortation? You have power to shorten the hours of trade—and it is both your interest and duty to endeavour to effect it. This is well argued and clearly shown in a Prize Tract by Dr. Bennett, published by the Early-Closing Association.

“To some of our readers it may be information, that the Association referred to was established on



the 18th of October, 1842, under the title of the 'Metropolitan Drapers' Association,' but was so altered in 1846, both in constitution and name, as to embrace *all* trades, as at present. Its object is, by means of argument and persuasion, with employers, and public co-operation, so to abridge the hours of business as to extend to assistants opportunity for recreation, and for physical, intellectual, and moral improvement.

"Through the *arduous*, though often *silent* and *unobserved* exertions of this Society, and its having set on foot other valuable Associations, which before were not thought of, the early-closing cause has during the last few years rapidly progressed, and its excellency is now all but universally acknowledged. The movement, while by many persons it has ever been viewed as one of the most *important*, has now become one of the most *popular* of the day. Employers, a large number of whom in past years entirely set their faces against the Association—believing its object either undesirable or unattainable—are now, *as a body*, as anxious for its success as are the assistants themselves. These circumstances sufficiently prove that the principles of the Society are sound ones, and that its operations have hitherto been conducted with prudence and respectability."\*

We suggest means by which this Society may be aided. "Money," writes Thomas Carlyle, "is the master organ, the soul's seat, the pineal gland of the body-social." And money is needed for this

\* See Brief Sketch of the History of the Early-Closing Association.

Association. It requires a local habitation, and wants money for rent. It prints reports and statistics, and needs money for publications. It employs a secretary, and needs money for his sustenance. The young men of London have contributed. Employers have contributed. And we ask pecuniary help from the public. Those who sustain by their money, Hospitals, and Asylums for the aged and needy, will surely feel that the effort to shorten labour is kindred in its spirit and aim with endeavours to provide for the orphan and widow—for the sick and infirm. And on the principle that prevention is better than cure—this endeavour has a peculiar claim on those whose spirit breathes “peace on earth, and good-will toward men.”

The circulation of the Society's publications, and the diffusion by all means of information on this subject, is another means by which the objects of the Association may be promoted. And above all, IS EARLY SHOPPING, AND GENERAL CONSIDERATION TOWARDS PERSONS ENGAGED IN TRADE. Your power to shorten the hours of trade-labour is, so far as creature-power is concerned, supreme. If there be no buyers at a late hour in the evening, the sellers will close their shutters. Make your purchases in the day-time, if possible, or, if this cannot be, at an early hour in the evening. Use your power to buy earlier in the day, to set free for repose—for recreation—for mental improvement—for religious pursuits—those who, by the system of late-shopping, are kept at business until the hour of sleep, and who awake to return to that business as their one

pursuit. You cannot consider merely your own pleasure and convenience in this matter, without transgressing the law — “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” To all your doings—hence to the time of day at which you buy—the law applies—“As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” To shop early will confer a benefit on thousands of your fellow-men. Then, “Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.” The power is certainly with the buyer, to a considerable extent.\*

In urging this upon our reader, we feel we are but executing a part of that commission by which we are sent to preach a gospel that gives peace to earth, and breathes good-will to all men. Did we occupy a private position, the inspired precept, “As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, and specially unto the household of faith,” would fix on us the responsibility of doing what we can to secure this object. And as a minister of Christ, we feel it right to use both public and private influence—all the influence we can command—to secure such moderation in the hours of business, as that while the duties of business are faithfully performed, other claims on our human nature may be fully met.

Religion and business are frequently separated.

\* We suggest the desirableness—other things being equal—of shopping with those tradesmen who close early. It may be, they are exposed to loss by Early Closing. Ought not the Public to protect them?

But we hold—that business is a noble sphere for religion, while religion directs in and qualifies for business. Religion has to do with all that is in man, and with all that belongs to man. No man has liberty to do that into which he cannot carry religious principle. And it is as much the duty of the Christian minister to direct men in matters pertaining to business, as it is his province to propound true doctrine. From a solemn conviction of duty—with the deep and full sympathy of our hearts—as a minister of Christ's holy Gospel—we say to all whom it may concern, *Moderate the hours of labour*. Defeat not the end of labour by its protraction. Destroy not by exertion the nature which labour was meant to support. Sacrifice not spirit to body. Lose not your soul for the gain of trade. Barter not eternal blessedness for the fingering, through a brief and uncertain season, of silver and gold. Entail not feebleness and disease on coming generations. Spread not woe, and want, and vice, by your buying and your selling. Turn not night into a season of unrest, and Sabbaths into days of weariness. Let not the press issue its streams of truth, and you drink not, or debar those from drinking whose thirst is stronger than your own. Deprive not yourself of all intelligence as a citizen, and doom not others to ignorance on matters connected with that body-politic of which they are part. Let not masters act, as though because they give laws in their establishments, they themselves are without law to society and to God. Let not the seller put his mere convenience before the real

welfare of thousands, or suppose that his advantage is promoted by late hours in trade. Let no father or child, no husband or wife, no brother or sister, do aught to destroy in England all that is enshrined in that Divine word—*Home*.

Let no ENGLISHMAN, by upholding the system of protracted toil, aid in bringing upon England that decline which M. Ledru Rollin declares has commenced; or that fall of England which the jealous Frenchman so ardently desires. Let France see, that although there are wounds and bruises in our body-politic, that there is some soundness in it—that the *head* is not sick, neither the *heart* faint; that Englishmen are open to conviction when their faults are laid bare before them, and that they have a power to will and to carry out those remedial measures by which healing and health may be secured to the country. Let no CHRISTIAN sacrifice his Christianity at the shrine of business, or of gain, or of mere convenience,—but let him make buying and selling an occasion of rendering homage to Christ, and of embodying and manifesting those Christian principles which “work no ill to our neighbour,” but which create a disposition, “as we have opportunity, to do good unto all men.”

When the Greeks met the Persians at Salamis, a mighty voice was heard in the Grecian squadron, urging the Greeks forward, and saying:—

“SONS OF THE GREEKS! ON! FREE YOUR COUNTRY, AND FREE YOUR CHILDREN, YOUR WIVES, THE ABODES TOO OF THE GODS OF YOUR FATHERS, AND THE TOMBS OF YOUR ANCESTORS. NOW IS THE CONFLICT FOR THEM ALL!”

We echo these inspiring words to the members of the Early Closing Association, and we say—*Sons of England!* ON! ON—in your bloodless conflict with cupidity and evil custom—with thoughtlessness and materialism! ON! in your peaceful but determined struggle! ON!—FREE YOUR COUNTRY, from the reproach, that the god of Englishmen is Money. FREE YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR WIVES from the misery of a home in which the mere shadow of the father and the husband flits, while the place of business has his reality and his substance.—FREE THEM from that bondage to shop, and warehouse, and trade, under which they now sigh and cry. Sell them not to the Pharaoh of commerce—or if you have sold them, demand them back, that they may hold a feast unto the Lord, in the right enjoyment of those domestic privileges from which they are now barred. ON!—FREE THE DWELLING-PLACES OF THE ONE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS from the reproach, that they are either houses of merchandise, or temples destitute of worshippers. ON!—FREE THE NAMES OF YOUR FATHERS from the charge of having made your lives bitter with hard bondage. Now is the conflict for them all! Sons of England, on! The God of heaven prosper you!

We have wandered from our “Hedges,” and have forgotten our “Serpents.” But as the kaleidoscope does not change the material with which it is charged when it exhibits a new form, so we have kept to our object, and have continued to embody our principles, although we have parted from the quiet hedge-row, and have placed ourselves on the

battle-field, or rather in the thickest of a naval fight. Returning to our proverb, we again declare that the "hedge" is broken, and that the "serpent" bites. God seeks a man to make up the hedge. READER, DO THY PART, WHETHER IT BE GREAT OR LITTLE.

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